

Sermon November 11th, 2018

Jesus' Invitation to Love in Radical Ways

In our gospel this morning, we hear some of Jesus's last words to his disciples before his arrest. Jesus says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Now remembering all the different ways Jesus loves us in the gospels, this seems a lot easier said than done.

Jesus loves, embraces, and heals the unclean in society. Jesus forgives those who have wronged him and others. Jesus constantly dialogues with those who see things differently than him. Who probably raise his blood pressure a few notches. Just think of all those heated interactions he has with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus respects and listens to women, children, and Gentiles voice their opinions in a society where this is frowned upon. Jesus gives so much of his time and energy giving hope to the poor. The poor who were perceived by many as sinners deserving their lot in life. Jesus never condones or uses violence as he tries to reform society and religion. Jesus even gives up his life for us. For his friends.

As we reflect on all the ways Jesus loves us we can see how difficult it is to live out this commandment in our lives. It isn't easy to love those who are unpopular or seen as unclean in our society. It isn't easy to love and empower those people in our society who we have had power over. It isn't easy to forgive those who have wronged us. It isn't easy to dialogue with those who see things completely different from us. It isn't easy to sacrifice for the sake of others. It isn't easy to use non-violent ways to reform society when we face empires who oppress us.

Remembrance Day of all days reminds us that we have not always been able to live up to Jesus' command for us.

Remembrance Day is a day where we look back on moments in our history where our inability to love one another has led to mass violence and suffering. Remembrance Day is a day where we continue to see all the conflicts going on around the world where people are suffering and dying as a result of our division and hatred towards one another.

It isn't easy for us to love one another as Jesus loves us. Yet, in our gospels Jesus shows us the way. Jesus invests time and energy into teaching his disciples how to love like he does. On the day of Pentecost

Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into the hearts of his followers helping them to keep loving others as he loves them. In our baptism we receive this gift of the holy spirit helping us love others as Jesus loves us.

Yes, we have moments where we fail to love as Jesus loves. But, with the Spirit we also have moments where we do love as Jesus loves impacting the lives of others in positive ways. Impacting our societies into places where peace and love are valued.

This being said, Remembrance Day is also a day where we remember those who sacrificed their lives with the hope that somehow through their actions, the future could be more loving and peaceful than the present. We remember all those who served and continue to serve, with the purpose of protecting the most vulnerable people in our societies. We remember all those voices who promote peace and bridge building in our world.

Today is Remembrance Day. A day that opens our eyes to see those moments where we are unable to love others as Jesus loves us. A day that opens our hearts to see those moments where we do love others as Jesus loves us. Where our words and actions impact people's lives in a positive way. Where our focus is on building bridges not walls. Creating peace not war. Like our reading of Ecclesiastes says this morning. There is time for war and there is a time for peace. Let today be a time for peace.

On November 11th, 1918 the world had been devastated by a war that lasted way longer than most people predicted. Yet, at 11am on this day, the guns went silent. Peace had finally come. There was hope for a better future.

Unfortunately, the world experienced a Second World War with similar devastation. Yet, once again in 1945 the guns went silent. And peace was established between the nations.

Many of us have relatives that fought in at least one of these two wars. Some of us have relatives that may have fought in other conflicts over the years. We remember their sacrifice of love in a time where love was hard to come by.

Being both German and British I had family members who fought on both sides of the war. But, only a generation or two later, my parents met. And brought their two families together as one.

Jesus invites us to pave the pathway to peace. To love one another as Jesus loves us. Even when loving people is hard to do. Because, when we can love people as Jesus loves us. Then we live in a world where peace prevails over war. Where the guns fall silent. Where bridges are being built. Where we stand together in solidarity showing those who try to divide and hate us that Jesus' selfless love and invitation to unity will prevail.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks for all those people who sacrificed their lives to save others. We give thanks for all those people who stand with the marginalized helping them reform their societies into a place where everyone feels loved and safe. We give thanks for all those who contribute to building peace and bridges in our world challenging the hate and division that exists. And even during these hard times, encourage us to love one another as you love us. **Amen.**